

Testimony of Ambassador Marek Magierowski, Ambassador of Poland to the United States

Honorable members of the Commission, distinguished Senators and Representatives, dear Chairman Cardin, dear Co-Chairman Cohen.

First and foremost let me express my gratitude for this unique opportunity to testify before the Helsinki Commission on matters of paramount importance not only for my country but also with regard to the future of the global security architecture.

Three months ago President Putin, unprovoked and acting in a premeditated manner, unleashed full-out war on a neighboring, sovereign and freedom-loving nation, causing unimaginable damage and suffering, mostly to civilians. The Kremlin's thinly veiled intent to erase the Ukrainian national identity, culture and language is utterly abhorrent and the Russian leaders' genocidal proclivities should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

As a consequence of Russia's barbaric aggression against Ukraine, Poland and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe are facing an unprecedented humanitarian challenge and the whole world is now on the verge of a global food crisis of extraordinary proportions. Also due to the Russian Federation's unlawful and inhumane actions.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Three days ago the Polish President Andrzej Duda paid a visit to Kyiv and delivered a speech in the Ukrainian parliament. He pointed out emphatically that – quote “ –despite widespread devastation, despite most horrible crimes, despite the great suffering that the Ukrainian people experience each day, the Russian invaders have never broken you. They have never succeeded. And, I trust, they will never succeed. The free world today has the face of Ukraine!” – unquote.

He also added: “Your loved ones: spouses, parents, children, grandchildren, those millions of people who had to leave Ukraine, fleeing the tragedy of war, also to Poland – are not refugees in our country. They are our guests”.

Over the last twelve weeks Poland has absorbed a wave of 3.5 million guests. An overwhelming majority found safe shelter in private homes, hosted and embraced by Polish families. An unheard-of outpouring of sympathy and solidarity towards our Ukrainian brethren and an inspiring example of cooperation between hundreds of NGO's, thousands of volunteers, state authorities and municipalities, all working tirelessly to ease the plight of those in need. According to several surveys conducted since the beginning of the war between 60 and 75 percent of Polish citizens have been involved, to a lesser or greater extent, in helping Ukrainian refugees: offering accommodation, establishing reception centers, running charities, donating or raising money.

Last March the parliament in Warsaw approved a bill which essentially facilitates the integration of Ukrainian migrants in the host country. More than a million have already applied for Polish ID which allows them, for instance, to set up their own businesses. Ukrainians can also send their offspring to Polish educational institutions. Approximately 200,000 Ukrainian children have already been incorporated into Poland's schooling system. They are eligible for free health insurance: thousands have been vaccinated, not only against Covid-19 but also against more common diseases.

Honorable members of the Commission

For most Poles “Solidarity” is by no means an empty word. Nor is it merely the name of the most famous dissident movement in Central Europe in the times of Soviet subjugation. Nowadays “Solidarity”, as a geopolitical concept, is one of the crucial pillars of Poland’s foreign policy.

It is our pride but also our obligation. Poland was oppressed by Soviet Russia for decades. In that period many nations displayed remarkable solidarity with us. Americans, Germans, the British, the French helped us regain our freedom. Today we are helping the Ukrainians defend theirs. Arming those who are fighting the Russian aggressor in Ukraine and, at the same time, taking care of their families in Poland. We need this common effort and we need solidarity to prevent the annihilation of the brave Ukrainian people.

Thank you very much.